(b) whether the low levels of Central assistance to the above backward States has adversely affected the healthcare facilities in these States; and

(c) if so, the action plan of Government to compensate the above backward regions, especially with reference to Orissa, to improve their healthcare infrastructure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Prioritisation of sectoral allocation under the Annual Plans is done by the State Governments. However, Planning Commission provides higher weightage to the backward States while allocating the Central assistance under Gadgil-Mukherjee formula. In addition, to improve healthcare infrastructure and provide better access to healthcare facilities in the States, the Government of India has recently launched a National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Under the National Rural Health Mission, there would be special focus on 18 States including the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and the State of Orissa.

Identification of poor families

2518. SHRIMATI JAMANA DEVI BARUPAL:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether programme evaluation study by Planning Commission and Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution suggests that Government should do away with methodology of identifying poor families on the basis of income/expenditure criterion;

(b) whether to improve delivery system and plug leakage, study suggest that full quota of foodgrain for distribution must reach retail outlets within first seven days of months for which doorstep delivery of grains by Government agencies is required; and

(c) if so, to what extent Government have agreed to change method of identifying poor to plug leakages in TPDS?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN) : (a) Yes, Sir. *Vide* section 7.1 (Chapter 7) Report on the Performance Evaluation of Targeted Public Distribution

System (TPDS), Programme Evaluation Organisation, Planning Commission it is suggested that "It would be appropriate to do away with the methodology of identifying poor families on the basis of income/ expenditure criterion, as identifying sources of income at the household level and measuring them with precision on such a large scale are fraught with many problems."

(b) Yes, Sir. *Vide* section 7.2 (Chapter 7) Report on the Performance Evaluation of Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Programme Evaluation Organisation, Planning Commission it is observed that late arrival of foodgrains at FPS constrains timely PDS distribution and contributes to leakage of subsidized grains. In this context the Report suggests "The full quota of foodgrains for distribution must reach the retail outlets (FPS) within the first seven days of the month. For this, door delivery of grains by Govt. agencies (the wholesale dealers) is required."

(c) Identification of poor (BPL) families for purpose of TPDS is done by the Government of the States/UTs, based on the guidelines formulated by the Ministry of Rural Development in 1997, while the Planning Commission periodically estimates the number of people below poverty line for purpose of policy formulation etc. As such measures for enhancing the efficiency of TPDS, including plugging leakages, is the responsibility of the State/UT Governments.

Under the guidelines issued by Department of Food and Public Distribution, Govt. of India for identification of BPL families under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the State Governments have been asked to identify the eligible families with involvement of Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas in rural areas and urban local bodies in urban areas. While identifying, the thrust should be to include only the really poor and vulnerable sections of the society such as landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans/craftsmen such as potters, tappers, weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. in rural areas and slum dwellers, porters, collies, rickshaw pullers, hand-cart pullers, fruit and flower sellers on the pavement etc., in urban areas. The criteria so indicated is only by way of illustration and is in no way an exhaustive list of those who could be brought within the ambit of the Below Poverty Line. The State Governments who are nearer to the beneficiaries are expected to be a better judge in this regard. The total number identified, however, should be within poverty estimates of Planning Commission for

the year 1993-94 subject to the population projections of Registrar General as on 1.3.2000. As per this criteria, the number of BPL households in the country has been estimated as 6.52 crore.

The following measures have been taken by Department of Food & Public Distribution, Govt. of India for streamlining the TPDS:—

(i) The Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001 was issued in order to streamline the functioning of the PDS and to make the same more effective and accountable. Any offence committed in violation of the provisions of the Order invokes criminal liability under Section 7 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

(ii) The State Governments and the Union Territory Administrations have been asked to actively involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions to monitor the functioning of the Fair Price Shops, as a measure of social audit;

(iii) The States and Union Territories have also been asked to constitute Vigilance Committees at the State, District, Block and FPS levels to oversee the functioning of PDS;

(iv) With a view to efficiently reaching PDS commodities to the consumers in a transparent manner, a model Citizen's Charter has been issued by the Central Government for adoption by the State Governments/UT Administration;

(v) A Task Force has been constituted to investigate into irregularities in the operation of TPDS and suggest remedial measures;

(vi) Conferences of State Food Secretaries, State Food Ministers, meeting with the representative of the All India Fair Price Dealers' Federation and a meeting with all the Members of Parliament was organized to discuss issues relating to the strengthening of PDS.

(vii) Regional conferences have been organized to discuss the problems being faced in the implementation of TPDS and suggest remedial actions.